

Sunday 26th April 2020

Call to worship

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Holy God, you call us together to be your holy people, and so we join together in spirit and in truth to give you praise for the joy of life and all your creation; for our redemption in Christ; for the empowerment of your Spirit. Amen

Confession

God of love and mercy, we come before you knowing that we are in need of forgiveness. We have sinned against you: in our speaking and in our silence; in our thinking and in our thoughtlessness; in our actions and in our inactions.

We have sinned against you in not loving you with our whole heart and soul and strength; in not loving our sisters and brothers in Christ.

Grant us, o Lord, your forgiveness, restore us in the image of your Son, and lead us along the way to your kingdom, to the glory of your name. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

O God, your heart is full of mercy. May we hear and trust your words to each of us: "Your sins are forgiven". May we forgive each other and forgive ourselves. Thanks be to God. Amen

The Lord's prayer

At the Saviour's command and formed by His divine teaching we pray together:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen

New Testament Reading:

Acts of the Apostles 2:36-41

“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles: “Brothers, what shall we do?” And Peter said to them: “Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord calls to Himself.” And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them saying: “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” So those who received his word were baptised, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Reflection

The people who listened to Peter were “cut to the heart”. Clearly moved within by the Holy Spirit, they were brought to repentance. Forgiveness of sins goes hand in hand with repentance. The gift of Christ is for the whole world, God wishes to forgive all sinners, but God also respects our human freedom because He created us in His image and likeness. Therefore, forgiveness needs to meet with our admission and repentance of our guilt. When someone does something wrong but does not acknowledge and renounce the wrong, reconciliation remains incomplete even if the victim of wrong is willing to forgive. This is the first point to take home with us today. When Peter says “...this Jesus whom you crucified” we must not think of those bad people back then who put Jesus on the cross. Instead, since we know that Jesus died for our sins once and for all, we must hear Peter saying “you” to us. He is pointing the finger to all sinners, past, present and to come. We are all responsible for His crucifixion. This is why there is need for repentance. But it is also very important to have faith in this merciful and loving God. A God “slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love”. It is God who takes the initiative in offering salvation. There was no need for God to save humankind. So why does He want to? Because He loves us. Being baptised in the name of Jesus Christ means that we embrace the faith of Israel in the one true God, who created all things, who spoke through the prophets and who sent His Word made flesh, our Lord Jesus, to die for our sins. Our faith is personal but

also collective. We believe that God who speaks to us personally, is also the God who spoke to all those who came before us in the Church. It is not enough to have a faith that is subjective and personal, it needs to be objective and tied to the beliefs of the Church, which in our tradition we call, catholic and apostolic church. To simplify this point, we can say that my personal faith is enriched by the faith of all other Christians because no one can know God entirely. Together we grow in the knowledge of God. Only if we work together, the Church will grow as it did in the passage of today.

We talked about repentance and we talked about faith. These points that we looked at above are necessary to welcome God fully into our lives. Saint Paul says that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit, but we need to allow God to dwell in us completely.

No one would go and start building a house on someone else's property. Would you do that? If you tried to do that, the owner of the land would be entitled to pull down what you have built. So, for God to dwell in us we need to let Him have full ownership of our "land" which is our free will. This is why it is important to start as soon as possible to practice our faith, to surrender to God, to trust in His judgement more than in ours. That is the hardest thing to do for a human being: to trust a God who calls us to go against our corrupted human nature. This is why Jesus came. He goes ahead of us in life, in death and finally in resurrection. So now we have a good reason to trust: God gave Himself to us and for us. Amen

Prayers of Intercession

Liberating God, in these times of limitations and fear, we bring our prayers to you for those whose lives are limited in more ways than one.

We pray for those who are limited by their own attitudes or beliefs; by the pain of their circumstances; by the action of others.

We pray for those worn down by illness or exhausted by caring for others, longing to feel the freshness and energy of a bright new day.

We pray for all people in the world confined in their own homes in these times of pandemic, longing to experience the possibility of travelling on an open road. In the

forced confinement of these days, may they find the open road that leads to the knowledge of you, Lord God.

We pray for those trapped in poverty, their energies sapped by the struggle against greed and injustice, longing to know the abundance of a world where the resources are freely shared. May these times teach us all, new ways to live in this world and share all that we have.

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen

Benediction:

The blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with you always. Amen

Rev. Bruno Boldrini